

Additions to the avifauna of Socotra and Abd Al-Kuri, with notes on the occurrence of some resident and migrant species

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Des données nouvelles ou passées inaperçues concernant l'archipel de Socotra sont présentées dans une des trois catégories suivantes: (i) espèces 'nouvelles', ne figurant pas sur la liste présentée par Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire¹ ou Kirwan *et al* (14 espèces, en majorité des oiseaux de mer ou des oiseaux terrestres observés en mer); (ii) espèces, enregistrées sous "other records", pour lesquelles des données nouvelles ou jusqu'alors ignorées qui contribuent de façon significative à notre connaissance de la distribution de l'espèce ou de sa présence à Socotra (12 espèces); (iii) espèces rejetées de la liste des oiseaux considérés avoir été observés de façon sûre dans l'archipel (4 espèces).

Introduction

The most recent review of the Socotran avifauna is Kirwan *et al*. Since publication, it has become apparent that a number of records, particularly from the surrounding seas, were omitted from both this and previous publications^{1,18}. In addition, further short ornithological visits to Socotra in March 1996 (Omar al-Saghier & R. F. Porter), December 1996 (David Stanton), March 1997 (Sana'a International School) and November 1997 (Omar al-Saghier) have added five new species to the island's list. With the discovery, in the Smithsonian Institution vaults in early 1997, of the long-lost Forbes-Watson manuscript describing his 1964 expedition to the island⁵, it is now considered appropriate to present an update to the avifauna of the Socotra archipelago.

Records below are in one of three categories: (i) 'new' species, not previously listed by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire¹ or Kirwan *et al* (14 species); with the exception of the five new species recorded in 1996 and 1997 (see above), all of these are of seabirds or birds 'at sea'; (ii) species, listed under 'other records', for which new or previously overlooked records add significantly to our knowledge of the species' distribution or occurrence in Socotra (12 species); and (iii) species rejected from the list of birds considered to have been reliably recorded in the archipelago (four species). Lastly, a full current species list is appended (see Appendix).

The first paragraph of each species account notes the status as given in Kirwan *et al*. The second paragraph presents all new information collected as a result of this review. For species listed under 'other records', observations listed in the second paragraph are always additional to the number of occurrences listed in the first paragraph of the species account.

New species

None previously listed by Kirwan *et al*.

Fregetta sp.

One c100 miles south of Socotra in May 1958; two records (11 and 12 August 1964) from Somali waters identifiable to species are both referable to Black-bellied Storm-petrel *F. tropica*³.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*

Norris¹⁰ recorded large numbers in close proximity to Socotra on 4 August 1951, whilst Phillips^{13,14} recorded at least 3–4 birds on 3 July 1945 and two probables on 15 January 1950, but subsequently reported a dark brown shearwater "which looks very like the Wedge-tailed" in some numbers in Socotran waters on 10–11 February 1953¹⁵. In the same area, on 5 August 1953, the same author reported two Wedge-tailed Shearwater among many smaller, blackish shearwaters, all of which were presumably—the then undescribed—Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*, but identified by Phillips as probably Mascarene Black Petrel *Pterodroma aterrima*¹⁵. Given the difficulties in separating *P. pacificus* from *Bulweria fallax*, it seems possible that Norris' observation may be referable to the latter species.

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*

Norris¹⁰ recorded large numbers, although fewer than the previous species, in Socotran waters on 4 August 1951.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

Considerable numbers in the seas around Socotra on 5 August 1953, including rafts of several hundreds north and west of the island in the early morning¹⁵, and a few north of the island on 30 September 1960¹⁷.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

A juvenile was at Wadi Mutrih on 21–22 December 1996 (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 9: 7).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Four at Hadibu marsh on 28 March 1996 (Omar al-Saghier & R F Porter) and two in Wadi Di-Farhoh on 15–18 March 1997 (Sana'a International School, *The Lammergeier* 12: 9).

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

One in Wadi Mutrih on 22 December 1996 (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 10: 6).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Phillips¹⁵ recorded a group of four *Phalaropus* sp. c50 km south of Socotra on 10 February 1953, and reported that "phalaropes are always present around Socotra and in the Gulf of Aden during the winter months". Most, he believed, were referable to *P. lobatus*, but some may have been Grey Phalarope *P. fulicarius*. The latter species is, however, a vagrant in Arabian waters¹⁶. In addition, several thousand *Phalaropus* sp. including flocks of 200–300 birds (of which two birds came on deck and were *P. lobatus*) in the seas north of the island on 30 September 1960¹⁷.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*

Norris¹⁰ recorded this species in Socotran waters on 4 August 1951 and Phillips¹⁵ noted two singles on 5 August 1953.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscatus*

Norris¹⁰ recorded this species, in greater numbers than the previous species, in Socotran waters on 4 August 1951.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Recorded off Abd Al-Kuri on 21 October 1930¹ and there are a number of other records from Somalian or Gulf of Aden waters^{2,9}. Forbes-Watson⁵ reported seeing a nightjar, which he presumed to be Nubian *C. nubicus*, south of Suk on the north coast of Socotra in late March 1964. G Popov recorded a nightjar sp. on 3–4 occasions at the south edge of the Hadibu plain in 1953. A male, the type-specimen of the endemic subspecies *jonesi*, is the only previous record of Nubian Nightjar from the island¹².

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

A female was present at Ras Momi, at the extreme eastern end of Socotra, on 23 and 25 December 1996. It was photographed on the latter date (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 9: 7).

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Two aboard ship north of Abd Al-Kuri on 21 October 1930¹.

Indian House Crow *Corvus splendens*

Six around Hadibu on 3–14 November 1997 (Omar al-Saghier per R F Porter *in litt.* 1997) had increased from

two ship-assisted birds which apparently arrived in 1996. It is intended to cull these birds.

Other records**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

Listed as a scarce passage migrant⁷ or vagrant¹.

One winter record: two near Hadibu on 26 December 1996 (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 9: 7).

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Scarce passage migrant, known from three records⁷.

Two winter records: immature in Wadi Mutrih on 22 December and an adult in Wadi Ma'abeth on 26 December 1996 (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 9: 7).

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

Passage migrant, occasionally recorded in considerable numbers⁷.

One winter record: 25 (four adults and 21 immatures) at Qariyah lagoons on 23 December 1996 (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 9: 7).

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

One collected by Bennett in 1888 during the Bent archaeological expedition, no locality or exact date available^{7,12}.

An unidentified immature crake species was seen in a marsh near Hadibu in December 1982¹⁹.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Passage migrant, recorded at Erhina lagoon in spring 1993⁷.

Archer & Godman (in Forbes-Watson⁵) probably saw an individual of this species at Hadibu in the early 1920s. Fairly common on rivers in the Hadibu Plain in December 1982¹⁹ and David Stanton (*The Lammergeier* 9: 7) recorded two near Hadibu on 20 December 1996: the first winter records.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Listed as a passage migrant, probably regular⁷.

One winter record: one at Wadi Mutrih on 22 December 1996 (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 9: 7).

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

A passage migrant which may winter⁷.

A female was collected by G Popov at Hadibu on 30 January 1953 and David Stanton (*The Lammergeier* 9: 7) observed three in Wadi Mutrih on 22 December 1996, confirming its presence in winter.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* complex

In reviewing photographs of birds of this complex recorded by the 1993 OSME expedition, R F Porter (*in litt.* 1997) reports that most large black-backed gulls were *benglini* but birds previously identified as *cachimans* are considered to belong to *barabensis*, and birds pre-

viously thought to be *taiinyrensis* are almost certainly all *beugliui* or *barabensis*. All *fuscus fuscus* were correctly identified.

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus sokotrae*

Resident. Apparently never common, the species was not recorded in December 1982¹⁹, in spring 1993⁷, or by David Stanton in December 1996.

One additional record, a male collected by G Popov at Hanifa, near Suk at the east end of the Hadibu plain, on 12 March 1953.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

The race *oreophila* is a winter visitor to Socotra⁷.

G Popov took three specimens, also all *oreophila*, from around Hadibu in early February 1953.

Socotra Bunting *Emberiza socotrana*

Endemic resident known from 22 specimens and a single sight record, involving two birds, in spring 1993⁷.

There is a further specimen record, a male taken by G Popov at Adala below Adho Dimelho, probably in March 1953. The species was not recorded in March 1996, December 1996 or March 1997.

Rejected species

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*

Status uncertain⁷.

Forbes-Watson⁵ presents cogent reasons for considering the records of Ogilvie-Grant & Forbes¹² as being a misidentification for Masked Booby *S. dactylatra*. There are three records of Red-footed Booby at c02°N off the Somali coast (J Ash *in litt.* 1997).

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Not listed for Socotra or Abd Al-Kuri⁷.

Ogilvie-Grant & Forbes¹² recorded a flock of geese, probably of this species, near Wadi Dimichiro. Although Forbes-Watson⁵ discounted the observation, the possibility of this species' occurrence should not be discounted.

Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

Not previously listed for Socotra or Abd Al-Kuri⁷.

Forbes-Watson⁵ regards an old and undated record by Hunter¹² as being probably in error, but the species has been recorded in Yemen⁶ and from Masirah Island and Omani Dhofar¹¹, and could conceivably occur on Socotra.

Hume's Tawny Owl *Strix butleri*

Not listed for Socotra or Abd Al-Kuri⁷.

Ogilvie-Grant & Forbes¹² mention the presence of a large owl on Socotra, with a call most closely approaching Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*. Presumably the species involved was *S. butleri*, but subsequent ornithological

visits to the island have failed to locate this or any other large owl species.

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Appendix: List of birds reliably recorded from Socotra and Abd Al-Kuri. Details of species' status, where not updated here is available in Kirwan *et al*¹ and Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire⁴.

Jouanin's Petrel <i>Bulweria fallax</i>	Egyptian Vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
Wedge-tailed Shearwater <i>Puffinus pacificus</i>	Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Flesh-footed Shearwater <i>Puffinus carneipes</i>	Common Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>
Audubon's Shearwater <i>Puffinus lherminieri</i>	Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Wilson's Storm-petrel <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Red-billed Tropicbird <i>Phaethon aethereus</i>	Lanner Falcon <i>Falco biarmicus</i>
Masked Booby <i>Sula dactylatra</i>	Saker Falcon <i>Falco cherrug</i>
Brown Booby <i>Sula leucogaster</i>	Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Socotra Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax nigrogularis</i>	Barbary Falcon <i>Falco (peregrinus) pelegrinoides</i>
Little Bittern <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Common Quail <i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Harlequin Quail <i>Coturnix delegorguei</i>
Striated Heron <i>Butorides striatus</i>	Helmeted Guineafowl <i>Numida meleagris</i>
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Spotted Crake <i>Porzana porzana</i>
Squacco Heron <i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Western Reef Heron <i>Egretta gularis</i>	Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Crab Plover <i>Dromas ardeola</i>
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Cream-coloured Courser <i>Cursorius cursor</i>
Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Common Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Greater Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	Lesser Sand Plover <i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
Eurasian Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	Greater Sand Plover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	Pacific Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis (dominica) fulva</i>
Common Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>
Garganey <i>Anas querquedula</i>	Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>
Ferruginous Duck <i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Temminck's Stint <i>Calidris temminckii</i>
	Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
	Pintail Snipe <i>Gallinago stenura</i>
	Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>
	Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
	Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>
	Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>
	Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
	Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>
	Green Sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i>
	Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>
	Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
	Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>
	Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
	Sooty Gull <i>Larus hemprichii</i>
	White-eyed Gull <i>Larus leucophthalmus</i>
	Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>
	Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>
	Yellow-legged Gull <i>Larus cachinnans</i>
	Swift Tern <i>Sterna bergii</i>
	Lesser Crested Tern <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>
	Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
	Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>
	Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougalli</i>
	White-cheeked Tern <i>Sterna repressa</i>
	Bridled Tern <i>Sterna anaethetus</i>
	Sooty Tern <i>Sterna fuscata</i>
	Saunders's Tern <i>Sterna albifrons saundersi</i>

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*
 Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii*
 Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*
 Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*
 Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia*
 White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*
 African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis*
 Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus*
 European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*
 Forbes-Watson's Swift *Apus berliozi*
 Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*
 European Roller *Coracias garrulus*
 Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus*
 Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
 Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*
 Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*
 Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*
 Rock Martin *Hirundo fuligula*
 Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
 House Martin *Delichon urbica*
 Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*
 Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*
 Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
 White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*
 Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*
 Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*
 Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*
 Socotra Warbler *Incana incana*
 Socotra Cisticola *Cisticola haesitata*
 Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*
 Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*
 Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*
 Socotra Sunbird *Nectarinia balfouri*
 White-breasted White-eye *Zosterops abyssinicus*
 Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*
 Indian House Crow *Corvus splendens*
 Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*
 Socotra Starling *Onychognathus frater*
 Somali Starling *Onychognathus blythii*
 Socotra Sparrow *Passer insularis*
 Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*
 Cinnamon-breasted Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi*
 Socotra Bunting *Emberiza socotrana*

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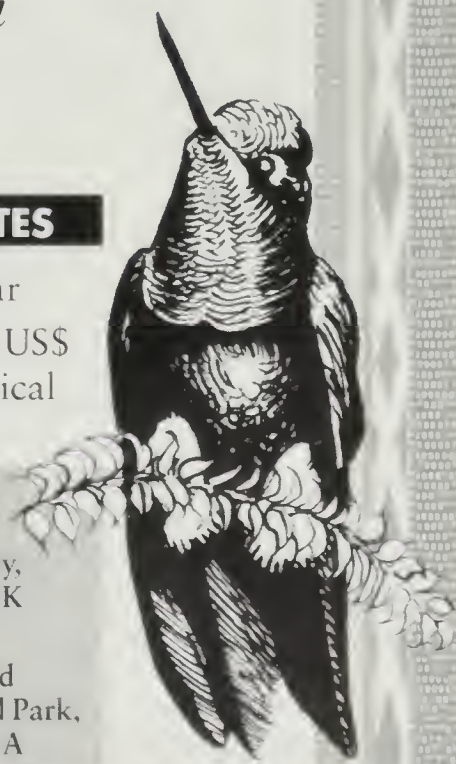
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